

House Foreign Affairs Full Committee Markup Hearing

H. Res. 252: Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution.

REP. SHERMAN: I want to acknowledge two of my colleagues, Adam Schiff and Frank Pallone, who have been here throughout. I want to acknowledge the ambassador of Armenia, who is in the audience, Mr. Tatoul Markarian, and I want to thank him for the detachment of Armenian soldiers who fought for four years along American soldiers in Iraq, and for the detachment that was sent two months ago to fight alongside Americans in Afghanistan.

And I want to apologize for the fact that the ambassador had to sit here while an opponent of this resolution stated that Armenians have not fought alongside Americans in these conflicts. I want to thank the survivors here.

If someone has to ask why do it now, why not put it off, how long are you asking these survivors to wait and shouldn't we do it while they're here to see it?

We have seen many people come here and say we should have both sides reconcile, we all long for that. We have seen in many parts of the world truth and reconciliation commissions, a truth and reconciliation process, and it works. I have not seen falsehood and cover-up commissions lead to reconciliations.

Now, one side in the protocols, the Armenian side, supports this resolution. The same president of Armenia who signed the protocols supports this resolution, and believes that it will lead to the reconciliation that those protocols envision. The other side has basically thrown away the protocols. When the prime minister of Turkey says that another issue, not germane of the protocols that of Nagorno-Karabakh, will hold them up forever, that he will not ratify those protocols until those people of Armenia abandon the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, he is basically saying "thanks for signing the protocols, now I'm throwing them away." So those protocols are dead unless we do something to shake them up. And nothing would do more than to show the people of Turkey that we cannot be cowed into denying the first genocide of the 21st century. Because denial is not just the last step in genocide, it is the first step in the next genocide. And that is why Hitler,

when faced with some wavering compatriots, was able to say we can get away with the Holocaust. And, after all, who today speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians? We are told this will somehow hurt our relationship with Turkey.

Long term we will not have a good relationship with Turkey until Turkey abandons this effort to deny the past and engage in genocide denial. Would we have a good relationship with a German government that denied the Holocaust? And who would have a good relationship with us if we denied slavery and so many other things of our past? And as the gentleman from American Samoa pointed out, the comfort woman resolution passed this committee even over the objection of our good friends in Japan.

Now, it is unseemly for this, the greatest parliament in the world, to be cowed into not recognizing what the opponents of the resolution, so many of them, describe as the truth because we are afraid of Turkey retaliation. But it is particularly unseemly in light of the fact that Turkey has proven that these threats are false, that we are cowering in the face of a paper tiger.

Let's go through the records: Turkey threatened harsh retribution to the countries that recognized the genocide, and then took only token diplomatic steps against Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Argentina, and ten other countries. Forty American states have recognized the Armenian genocide, and the trade relations between those states and Turkey has only grown. The greatest attempt outside the US was an attempt to get France to not recognize the Armenian genocide. In 2001 France passed a law recognizing the Armenian genocide. In the subsequent six years, exports from France to Turkey went up fourfold, even after France had been threatened with a boycott. In fact there have been massive increases in exports by Belgium, Canada, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, and Russia to Turkey. Perhaps the key to getting Turkey on our side is to pass this resolution. That's not what they say, but that's what seems to happen when you look at their recent past. Turkey should acknowledge that we have provided them with 23 billion dollars in aid, we saved them from communism, we helped build the pipeline that brings them oil today, we prevented an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, and we are the loudest voice in helping Turkey enter the European Union. With all that, they shouldn't ask us to act like cowards and deny the truth.